



CHATEAU MONTELENA

ESTABLISHED 1882

2018 Napa Valley Chardonnay

Notes from the Winemaker, Matt Crafton

INTRODUCTION

Paradoxically, the “easy” or “straightforward” vintages can be the most difficult for me as a winemaker. The media, critics, and industry representatives tend to praise classic California vintages as a tide that lifts all ships, providing a simple, neat narrative that makes for clean headlines and a universal endorsement of the resulting wines. And they’re correct. For those wineries making high-volume, formulaic products, these vintages can be a godsend. But for us at Montelena, the challenge becomes how to artfully craft the mosaic, that beautiful composition of the disparate parts of each vineyard block into something truly captivating and nuanced, amidst so much uniformity. 2018 certainly qualifies in that it would have been tantalizingly easy to fall into the rut of recipe-driven, prescribed process. Thus our objective became how to highlight subtlety; how to tactfully magnify the shades of flavor that are so easily obscured by the abundant sunshine. It’s a unique mindset in that we actively search for and embrace the challenge. It’s the Montelena way.

VINTAGE WEATHER

On the heels of a relatively dry winter, March and April brought ample rain and cool temperatures, delaying budbreak in the vineyard. June ushered in a very typical, warm, Napa Valley summer punctuated by cool nights especially into August. As a result, ripening was slow yet consistent, requiring patience and precise attention to flavor development and texture in the fruit. The vineyards were harvested over the course of an entire month, a luxury we took full advantage of.

NOSE

Golden straw-colored in the glass, the wine opens with cinnamon and ripe peach, bolstered by aromas of melon, fig, and pear. More fruity than floral upon release, there’s nonetheless plenty of honeysuckle and spice, softening to green apple and vanilla.

PALATE

Initially fused with lemon curd and ripe orange, there’s dynamic tension transitioning to the midpalate between the suppleness of summer stonefruit and the austere acid beneath. The citrus lingers as well, amidst a billowy texture that bolsters the bare minerality, contrasted only by the whisper-soft hint of fresh baked bread.

FINISH

Bright and fresh, ripe apricot along with orange marmalade lend a slight sweetness peppered by toasted almond and clove.

Technical Information

HARVEST DATES

August 27 - September 25, 2018

ALCOHOL

13.9%

BLEND

100% Chardonnay

BARREL AGING

10 months, French Oak

BOTTLING DATE

July 29 - August 7, 2019

WINEMAKER

Matt Crafton